DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 432 376 PS 027 739

TITLE	Central Falls' Kids First: A Case Study.
INSTITUTION	Tufts Univ., Medford, MA. Center on Hunger, Poverty and Nutrition Policy.
PUB DATE	1996-03-00
NOTE	30p.; For related document, see PS 027 738.
AVAILABLE FROM	Center on Hunger, Poverty and Nutrition Policy, Tufts University School of Nutrition Science and Policy, 11 Curtis Ave., Medford, MA 02155; Tel: 617-627-3956; Fax: 617-627-3020.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative (142)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Agency Cooperation; Case Studies; *Child Health; Community Programs; Elementary Secondary Education; *Hunger; Intervention; Low Income Groups; Models; *Nutrition; Nutrition Instruction; *Program Effectiveness
IDENTIFIERS	Child Nutrition Programs

ABSTRACT

Central Falls' Kids First, a 3-year initiative was designed to eradicate local childhood hunger through the expansion of federal child nutrition programs in Central Falls, a small, densely populated, ethnically diverse and low-income city in northeastern Rhode Island. A strong community partnership was created and included the office of the city's mayor, the superintendent of schools, and representatives from health and social service agencies serving the city. This partnership adopted four goals: (1) School Breakfast expansion; (2) Summer Feeding Program expansion; (3) Women, Infants, and Children Nutrition program expansion; and (4) Nutrition Education. The baseline assessment findings indicated that by the end of the project, the initiative had successfully achieved all of its goals through the implementation of many innovative programs. There was broader participation in child nutrition programs throughout the community, and new and stronger support for these programs from community and school leaders and growing support from parents. There were also more requests from community and school groups to discuss the importance of nutrition and the role of child nutrition programs in the community. Keys to the success of the initiative included the attention and commitment of the steering committee and project staff, creative program design and outreach, and the ability to get sustained media coverage. (Nine appendices include a list of the initiative's major accomplishments, focus group and survey findings, and descriptions of program components.) (KB)

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CENTRAL FALLS' KIDS FIRST

A CASE STUDY

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CENTRAL FALLS' KIDS FIRST

A CASE STUDY

Center on Hunger, Poverty and Nutrition Policy

School of Nutrition Science and Policy
Tufts University

March 1996

CENTRAL FALLS' KIDS FIRST: A CASE STUDY

The case study describes Central Falls' Kids First, a three-year initiative in Central Falls, Rhode Island, which was designed to eradicate local childhood hunger through the expansion of federal child nutrition programs. This study details the development of the initiative as a community partnership, and offers specific examples of program expansion activities and tools. This model can provide guidance to communities that seek comprehensive solutions to hunger, and to community groups engaged in child nutrition program expansion activities.

CENTRAL FALLS, RHODE ISLAND

The Community

Central Falls is a small, densely populated city in northeastern Rhode Island. One of the most densely populated urban areas in the Northeast, over 17,000 people reside in this 1.2 square mile area, according to the 1990 United States Census of the Population. Census data show Central Falls to be an ethnically diverse, low-income community (34% non-white, and median household income of $18,617). Since the 1970s, there has been a steady flow of new immigrants and low-income families moving in and out of Central Falls. Seven public schools serve 2,853 students from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds: 48% Latino (Colombian, Dominican, Guatemalan, Puerto Rican and Portuguese), 41% Caucasian, 10% Black and 1% Asian. Ninety percent of Central Falls school children are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals.

In 1992, the state of Rhode Island accepted fiscal responsibility for Central Falls' schools to avert a fiscal crisis. The district school committee was replaced by a single administrator appointed by the governor. A cooperative relationship between this administrator and the district superintendent helped facilitate the development of many new school-based initiatives for Central Falls children.

CENTRAL FALLS' KIDS FIRST

Development of a Partnership

In the early 1990s, company leaders of Hasbro, Inc., a large toy conglomerate with headquarters in Rhode Island and a factory in Central Falls, were concerned about the welfare and future productivity of the children of Central Falls. Early in 1992, a representative of the Hasbro Children's Foundation and the director of the Tufts University Center on Hunger, Poverty and Nutrition Policy met with the Mayor of Central Falls and the Superintendent of Schools to determine if there was an interest in creating a public/private partnership to focus on improving the general welfare of the city's children. The groundwork was laid for a community-wide partnership committed to safeguard the health and enhance the educational preparedness of Central Falls children. With growing evidence that even mild undernutrition jeopardizes the cognitive development of children, the Center on Hunger, Poverty and Nutrition Policy proposed that the partnership strive to eliminate childhood hunger in the city.

The partnership included the Office of the Mayor, the Superintendent of Schools, representatives from health and social service agencies serving the city, administrators of the School Food Services Division of the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, representatives of the Hasbro Children's Foundation, the Alan Shawn Feinstein Foundation, and the Center on Hunger, Poverty and Nutrition Policy. The partnership was named **Central Falls' Kids First**.

Partnership Goals

The mission of Central Falls' Kids First was to ensure that Central Falls children had adequate nutrition to promote their health and cognitive development. Early in the development of Central Falls' Kids First, the community partnership adopted four goals:

1. To make school breakfast available to every needy, eligible school-age child in Central Falls, and to maximize students' participation in the School Breakfast Program.

2. To expand the Summer Food Service Program to protect needy eligible children during summer months when they are not covered by the School Breakfast and School Lunch Programs.

3. To serve at least 85% of eligible mothers, babies and young children through the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC).[1]

4. To heighten the awareness of Central Falls households about good health and nutrition practices and to provide such knowledge through ongoing educational programs.

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[1] 85% coverage represents a federal policy guideline for "full coverage".

Steering Committee

The Central Falls' Kids First Steering Committee was appointed by the mayor to represent the community and the founding partners. The committee included local agency representatives, school administrators and staff, representatives from community health care, clergy and parents. Representatives from the Hasbro Children's Foundation, the Center on Hunger, Poverty and Nutrition Policy, and the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education also served on the steering committee. (Appendix A provides a complete roster of steering committee members and their community affiliations.) The partnership received a grant to hire a professional staff person to organize the steering committee, oversee project activities, and monitor the progress of Kids First.

The Kids First Steering Committee became operational in November 1992. The steering committee met monthly to plan strategies to achieve its goals. Groups of three to five committee members served on subcommittees charged with gathering baseline information and planning strategies in each of the four goal areas. (Appendix B provides a summary of the major accomplishments of Central Falls' Kids First. A timeline of the major activities of the initiative is provided in Appendix C.)

INTERVENTION MODELS

Central Falls' Kids First made significant progress toward achieving its goals. In each goal area, interventions were developed that may serve as models for other communities. The following is a description of these intervention models and the specific techniques used to assess community needs, engage community support, and enhance program participation.

BASELINE: COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Central Falls' Kids First used a variety of assessment techniques to gauge the level of community awareness about child nutrition programs and families' utilization of these programs. Three different types of strategies were employed to understand program participation in the context of the community:

Focus groups, surveys/interviews, and informal discussions with parents throughout the community provided the steering committee with firsthand information from families on program awareness and barriers to participation.

Interviews with community leaders such as city officials, school administrators, clergy, and directors of local social service agencies yielded insight into the community.

Collection of existing information including participation data, school enrollment numbers, and program eligibility rates provided a baseline from which to evaluate the effectiveness of new expansion activities.

These vehicles provided the background information needed to develop effective program expansion activities. They also helped educate community leaders and program sponsors, and harness their support for the Kids First agenda. Finally, this new information motivated the program sponsors to take a new look at their programs, and rethink how to serve best the nutritional needs of local children.

Examples of Assessment Techniques and Findings

Focus Groups

School breakfast participation rates in all Central Falls schools were below national averages: only 17% of low-income children who participated in the School Lunch Program participated in the School Breakfast Program in Central Falls compared to 36% nationally. A team of local volunteers was trained by the project staff person to conduct focus groups in the community to determine the cause of low breakfast participation throughout the district. This information would help the Steering Committee to design effective strategies to increase participation. The interview team conducted ten separate focus groups, which were comprised of parents, junior/senior high students, elementary students, and food service workers, where they asked specific questions about the School Breakfast Program, and they also asked for suggestions to improve the program and increase participation. Group responses were categorized to identify common attitudes and concerns about school breakfast. (Appendix D provides examples of focus group questions and a summary of findings.)

The comments from parents, food service workers and children about how to increase participation in the program were very useful to the Kids First committee. The comments suggested that many parents had limited knowledge and/or misconceptions about the School Breakfast Program, while isolated comments from students and parents suggested that a variety of negative social stigmas could be associated with program participation. The results of the focus groups compelled the committee to work to create broader awareness and generate positive exposure for the School Breakfast Program in the schools and throughout the community.

Summer Food Service Survey/Interview

A survey of local families was conducted to assess public awareness about the Summer Food Service Program. Written surveys were distributed to numerous community agencies that served Central Falls' families, including WIC, YWCA, the Community Center, and various cultural programs. When necessary, agencies administered the survey as an interview to get feedback from illiterate or non-English speaking parents. Time and resource constraints dictated that this survey could not reach all families in the community, but its broad distribution through local agencies provided useful information about program awareness. (Appendix E includes a copy of the survey instrument administered in Central Falls with a summary of results.) The results of this survey helped to motivate program sponsors to develop a community awareness campaign for the Summer Food Service Program and to strive to improve meal service.

GOAL 1: SCHOOL BREAKFAST EXPANSION

Goal Summary

Program data from the 1992-93 school year showed low participation in school breakfast throughout the district; on average, fewer than 300 out of 2,690 children (11% of enrolled children) participated daily. Only 17% of low-income children who participated in the School Lunch Program participated in the School Breakfast Program.

Central Falls' Kids First was responsible for broad expansion of the School Breakfast Program in Central Falls schools from 1993 to 1995. As a result of the committee's efforts, all children in the district had access to school breakfast, and every child, regardless of family income, could eat breakfast at school free of charge. Average daily participation increased **83%** from 1993 to 1995. Low-income participation nearly doubled as a result of the initiative.

Breakfast Expansion Models

Breakfast Club

To maximize school breakfast participation, Central Falls' Kids First designed a comprehensive promotional program for the School Breakfast Program that addressed public awareness, education and outreach. The promotional concept was called the ***Breakfast Club***, and all of Central Falls' elementary schools participated. The Breakfast Club offered schools a series of monthly breakfast promotions with informational fliers for parents and special school-based activities, contests and incentives for children. (Appendix F provides examples of Breakfast Club themes and activities. Resources for promotion and samples of promotional fliers are included with the supplementary materials.)

The Breakfast Club increased elementary students' participation in breakfast and informed parents about the importance of breakfast. The Club also generated interest and support for school breakfast among school administrators. School principals found the Breakfast Club easy to administer and an effective way to get children to school on time. They also enjoyed the Best Practice Award they received from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the media recognition that resulted from their involvement in the project.

Operation Breakfast: A Universal-Free School Breakfast

With the support of Kids First, the Central Falls School Department conducted a four month pilot of universal-free school breakfast in all Central Falls Schools, known as ***Operation Breakfast***. Kids First enhanced existing school breakfast promotions to further increase community awareness and student participation in Operation Breakfast (see Appendix G). A universal-free breakfast program is one in which all children in a participating district eat school breakfast for free. The district (or other party) must accept financial responsibility for the cost of meals served to children who are not income-eligible for free meals under USDA

guidelines. A universal-free program can be cost-effective for districts in low-income areas because most districts are reimbursed more than cost for the free meals which are served to income-eligible children.

The Tufts Center on Hunger, Poverty and Nutrition Policy evaluated the impact of the universal-free School Breakfast Program on participation rates and indicators of student preparedness for school. The study showed that school breakfast participation rose 98% among a random sample of Central Falls elementary students, and that participants had lower tardiness and absenteeism rates compared to non-participants. A complete description of the Universal-Free Evaluation Study is available from the Center. The success of the pilot project led school administrators to make universal-free breakfast a district policy.

GOAL 2: SUMMER FEEDING PROGRAM EXPANSION

Goal Summary

The Summer Food Service Program, sponsored by the Central Falls Recreation Department, became the focus of Kids First efforts in the early months of 1993. A subcommittee was formed to assess ways to expand participation in the city's summer lunch program. Available information indicated that only 17% of children eligible for free or reduced-price school meals participated in the summer lunch program in 1992, or an average of 325 children each day.

Central Falls' Kids First, working closely with the Recreation Department, was successful in its efforts to encourage families with children to participate in the Summer Food Service Program. Average daily lunch participation increased **66%** from 1992 to 1993, and remained close to this higher level in 1994. When breakfast was introduced in 1994, local children had access to two meals each summer day when school was not in session.

Summer Food Service Expansion Models

Family Outreach

In collaboration with the city's Summer Recreation Program, the subcommittee developed a comprehensive outreach plan to bring children into the summer lunch sites that included: 1) distribution of multicultural outreach materials in the schools and throughout the community; 2) expansion of program services in the parks and in underserved neighborhoods; and 3) introduction of lunchtime promotions to attract new children to the park and to keep families interested in the program. (Appendix H offers a summary of the outreach campaign. Examples of promotional items are included with the supplementary materials.) Many families became actively involved in lunchtime activities and other recreational activities in the parks and increased parental involvement in the lunch program enriched the overall Summer Recreation Program. The program's success and community support for the program was highlighted in a segment of *Good Morning America* televised in August 1993.

Breakfast in the Park

Based on the growing success of the School Breakfast Program in the district's elementary schools, the recreation department launched a breakfast program during the summer of 1994. The idea of serving breakfast in the parks, in addition to lunch, raised concerns about the costs and logistics of additional deliveries, overnight food storage, and program regulations that required a gap of three full hours between breakfast and lunch service. A local school breakfast aide who had been involved in the summer lunch program the previous summer volunteered to coordinate the breakfast program in her neighborhood park. Her dedication to the children, and her organizational skills and understanding of program requirements helped the recreation director find workable solutions to each logistical problem, and breakfast was served each rain-free weekday morning throughout the summer.

GOAL 3: WIC EXPANSION

Goal Summary

The WIC subcommittee of Central Falls' Kids First hoped to secure state funding to augment federal funds for the WIC Program in order to achieve full funding for WIC and maintain participation rates at 85% or higher in Central Falls (85% represents the policy guideline for "full coverage"). Discussions between members of the subcommittee and the Governor of Rhode Island in 1993, and again in 1994, were unsuccessful as a result of state fiscal problems. The subcommittee then directed its attention to the expansion of the Rhode Island WIC Farmers' Market Voucher Program. A clear success of the Kids First initiative is that Central Falls WIC recipients became active participants in the WIC Farmers' Market Voucher Program where they could purchase fresh fruits and vegetables directly from local farmers.

WIC Expansion Model

WIC Farmers' Market Voucher Program

In 1995, Kids First focused on expansion of the Rhode Island WIC Farmers' Market Voucher Program into the Central Falls area. This relatively new program is offered by USDA and it was piloted in Rhode Island the previous summer. It provided WIC clients, in the Providence area exclusively, with vouchers to purchase fresh, nutritious fruits and vegetables from a local farmers' market that were otherwise not available to WIC recipients. It was estimated that over 1,700 area WIC clients could benefit from a program that would serve the greater Central Falls area.

Central Falls' Kids First advocated for state funding for the WIC Farmers' Market Voucher Program, and worked with the Providence DownCity Farmers' Market Cooperative to create a multicultural farmers' market for Central Falls (see Appendix I). In May 1995, state funds were secured and WIC Farmers' Market vouchers were available to clients in Central Falls which could be redeemed at the Central Falls farmers' market.

GOAL 4: NUTRITION EDUCATION

Goal Summary

The WIC program, which provides nutrition education to its clients, was virtually the only general nutrition education resource available to families in Central Falls at the onset of the Kids First initiative. Kids First sponsored or supported a variety of programs and activities to provide families with information about how to feed their children, prepare nutritious meals with minimal food dollars, and gain access to food assistance.

As of August 1995, over 135 adults and 226 children participated directly in a variety of nutrition education opportunities fostered by Kids First. Central Falls' Kids First made significant progress toward establishment of an ongoing nutrition education program for the community by successfully recruiting Share Our Strength's Operation Frontline to Rhode Island. Additionally, students were exposed to nutrition information through community activities, in their classrooms, and in the cafeteria through the ongoing Breakfast Club initiative.

Nutrition Education Initiatives

WIC Celebration as a Nutrition Education Event

The first nutrition education opportunity sponsored by Central Falls' Kids First was designed to draw attention to WIC and the families it served in Central Falls. On March 17, 1994, the WIC subcommittee of Kids First hosted an event to mark the 20th anniversary of the WIC program and invited local WIC recipients to be its special guests. "Making a Healthy Family" was chosen as the theme for the celebration that included lectures, lunch, and a creative nutrition education performance from FOODPLAY, a performing troupe of nutritionists. Child care was provided by students from home economics classes in the Central Falls Junior/Senior High School. Highlights included a lunch catered by some of the area's finest chefs, cooking demonstrations that featured only WIC approved foods, and an engaging performance by FOODPLAY.

Share Our Strength's Operation Frontline

Central Falls' Kids First successfully elicited Share Our Strength's (SOS) agreement to have Greater Providence included in the list of cities slated to start Operation Frontline programs in the fall of 1994. Frontline is a nutrition education program developed by SOS that uses volunteer chefs to teach low-income adults how to prepare economical and nutritious meals. The first Frontline classes were offered in Central Falls in October 1994, with new programs starting every eight weeks thereafter. Over 100 Central Falls residents attended Frontline classes between October 1994 and June 1995. The program's success is evidenced by the waiting lists for each new program and highly positive evaluations by participants.

Breakfast in the Classroom

Breakfast in the Classroom is a breakfast promotion program developed by Kids First through which elementary students received a bag breakfast, watched a special breakfast promotion video, and discussed why children need breakfast in order to perform at their best. The program, also adapted for high school students, was successfully piloted in Central Falls during National Nutrition Month (March 1995). Through Rhode Island's School Breakfast Expansion Grant, Breakfast in the Classroom continues to be offered in the schools.

Green Thumb Project

Representatives from Operation Frontline and other members of Kids First joined forces to develop a community garden for Central Falls youth known as the *Green Thumb Project*. They recruited a small group of middle school youth and offered them opportunities to learn gardening and cooking skills, and to participate in a series of field trips to enrich these experiences. A garden plot was successfully cultivated and the group harvested fruits and vegetables for their cooking sessions and to bring to their families. Based on the success of the project, Operation Frontline has proposed more classes for Central Falls youth and Kids First plans to develop this garden concept further.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

From 1992 through 1995, Central Falls' Kids First achieved significant progress on the four goals designed to reduce childhood hunger in the community; school breakfast expansion, summer feeding expansion, WIC expansion, and new developments in community nutrition education services. Keys to the success of this initiative and its targeted activities included the attention and commitment of the steering committee and project staff person, the ability to get sustained media coverage, and a diverse group of funders.

The Partnership

The Kids First collaborative partnership had the power and influence to make things happen in the community because it brought together community members, leaders, and professionals to forge a strong local alliance against childhood hunger. The continued participation and representation of community leaders in the work of Kids First offered sustained leadership and commitment to the initiative, and encouraged other community groups and individuals to engage in the activities of the project.

The project staff person fostered new relationships with individuals and organizations who were invited to attend the steering committee's monthly meetings. Steering committee meetings were informal and conducive to sharing information, which offered members valuable networking opportunities. The primary focus of these meetings was to decide actions and outcomes that could advance the Kids First agenda. Brief minutes, progress reports and meeting reminders were consistently distributed between steering committee meetings.

Subcommittee meetings and other special meetings were kept to a minimum and much of the business of the committee was conducted over the telephone. To ensure progress on Kids First activities, logistical decisions were made by the staff person after consultation with one or two key members.

The Kids First partnership succeeded because individual members were able to observe concrete progress on the goals of the initiative. They remained committed to the project because they felt the project positively affected families in the community. They also enjoyed the collaboration and sense of community spirit that came from being involved in the partnership.

The Media

The steering committee, with the assistance of the public relations staff at Hasbro, Inc. and media contacts through the Tufts Center on Hunger, Poverty and Nutrition Policy, effectively used the local and national media to increase public awareness and support for targeted programs. Media exposure increased interest and enthusiasm for Kids First throughout the community and also kept steering committee members engaged in the initiative.

The local media was updated regularly as new expansion activities were introduced in Central Falls. Project successes were reported to the local news bureaus through news releases and phone calls to local reporters. Local media heard about Kids First from many different community perspectives including city government, the schools, local businesses and community groups. This repetition and broad-based involvement reinforced the significance of the project.

Coverage of Kids First by the national media stemmed in large part from the willingness of Kids First members to work with producers to help them develop their stories through arranged interviews, focus groups and community photo shoots. This cooperation led to positive national exposure and helped generate community support for child nutrition programs and Kids First. For example, in 1993, ABC's *Good Morning America* featured the Summer Food Service Program in Central Falls as a model for how to harness community support and participation. Again in 1995, ABC's *Nightline* featured Central Falls schools, children and school administrators in a program about the district's support for the School Breakfast Program.

Supportive Alliances

Any community initiative is highly vulnerable to changes in public and private support. Continuation of Central Falls' Kids First was dependent on external financial support, in-kind support of its community partners, and the supportive alliances the Kids First committee established with program sponsors and administrators.

Agency and Foundation Representation. The leadership and in-kind support of Kids First partners was critical to its success. Their active participation in Kids First gave the initiative strength and substance.

Financial Support. Grants from three separate foundations provided for a Kids First staff person, start-up funds for the expansion of the Summer Food Service Program in Central Falls, and the Green Thumb Project.

Operation Frontline. Kids First looked primarily to existing programs to help accomplish its goals. Share Our Strength's Operation Frontline was seen as a valuable educational resource for Central Falls residents. Kids First will continue to foster and support Operation Frontline in the community.

USDA Collaboration. Kids First worked with state and regional officers from USDA in the development of expansion activities. Intervention models were submitted to USDA's Best Practice Award Program, and the Central Falls School Department and Kids First received Regional Best Practice Awards in 1994 and 1995.

Future Support. Kids First helped lay the groundwork for new initiatives and new funding from the federal government for Central Falls school meal programs. Awards to Rhode Island that will benefit Central Falls include a USDA Breakfast Expansion Grant and a USDA Team Nutrition Grant.

CONCLUSION

There are positive indications of broader awareness and acceptance of the child nutrition programs targeted by Kids First in Central Falls schools and the community. This is exemplified through:

- broader participation in child nutrition programs throughout Central Falls;
- new and stronger support for these programs from community and school leaders;
- growing support for these programs from parents; and
- more interest and requests from community and school groups to discuss the importance of nutrition and the role of child nutrition programs in the community.

As evidence of the project's sustainability, founding partners continue to express strong support for Central Falls' Kids First. Their participation preserves the broad vision of the initiative, and encourages and supports others to work for ongoing progress on the Kids First agenda. While financial support is critical to the initiative's future, the community's ability to sustain a spirit of commitment to the productive futures of Central Falls' children remains the underpinning for success.

APPENDIX

Appendix A	Central Falls' Kids First Steering Committee
Appendix B	Major Accomplishments
Appendix C	Project Timeline
Appendix D	Focus Group Discussion Guide and Findings
Appendix E	Summer Food Service Program Survey
Appendix F	School Breakfast Club
Appendix G	Operation Breakfast
Appendix H	Summer Food Service Program Outreach Campaign
Appendix I	Central Falls Multicultural Farmers' Market

APPENDIX A

CENTRAL FALLS' KIDS FIRST STEERING COMMITTEE

Honorary Chair:

Mayor Thomas Lazieh
City of Central Falls

Chair:

Nancy Krieger
Director
Channel One
Substance Abuse
Prevention Program

Members:

Guy Abelson
Owner
Catering Collaborative

David Andreozzi
Finance and
Administration Manager
Rhode Island Department
of Education, Office of
School Food Services

Karen Bradbury
Teacher
Central Falls Junior/Senior
High School

J. Larry Brown
Director
Center on Hunger,
Poverty and Nutrition
Policy
Tufts University

Catherine Chandley
Production and Training
Specialist
Rhode Island Department
of Education, Office of
School Food Services

Maureen Chevrette
Superintendent of Schools
Central Falls Schools

Linda Cipriano
Director
YWCA of Greater RI

Larry Culpepper
Physician
Memorial Hospital

Adrienne DiMeo
Federal Program
Coordinator
Rhode Island Department
of Education, Office of
School Food Services

Paul Dragon
Providence Coordinator
Operation Frontline

Bob Draper
Principal
Veterans Memorial School

Troy Earhart
Education Consultant
Hasbro Children's
Foundation and the Alan
Shawn Feinstein
Foundation

Alan Shawn Feinstein
Alan Shawn Feinstein
Foundation

Maureen Fox
Food Service Director
Central Falls Schools

Edmond Heroux
Director
Central Falls Recreation
Department

Daniel Issa
State Senator
District #35

Gayle Kelly
Nutritionist and
Kids First Staff Person

Tracey Magill
WIC Coordinator
Blackstone Valley
Community Health Care

Judith McKenna-Shea
Director
Blackstone Valley
Perinatal Network

Carolyn Roseman
Principal
Captain G. Harold Hunt
School

Robert Perron
Clergy
Notre Dame Church

Nancy Sandbach
Nutrition Education
Specialist
New England Dairy and
Food Council

Chris Shea
Executive Director
Blackstone Valley
Community Health Care

APPENDIX B

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF CENTRAL FALLS' KIDS FIRST

SCHOOL BREAKFAST EXPANSION

School Breakfast Program expanded to all schools

Universal-free School Breakfast Program established

83% increase in school breakfast participation, 1993 to 1995

Awarded United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Best Practice, 1994

Awarded USDA Best Practice, 1995

SUMMER FEEDING EXPANSION

New summer feeding sites initiated

66% increase in summer feeding participation, 1992 to 1994

USDA cited Central Falls' successful outreach activities, 1993

EXPANSION OF THE SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTAL FOOD PROGRAM FOR WOMEN, INFANTS AND CHILDREN (WIC)

WIC Farmers' Market Voucher Program established for local WIC clients

Community Farmers' Market developed for community-wide use

EXPANSION OF NUTRITION EDUCATION

Share Our Strength's Operation Frontline instituted; over 100 local residents participated, October 1994 to June 1995 (program continuing)

Breakfast promotion activities (Breakfast in the Classroom, Parent/Teacher Breakfasts, Breakfast Club) increased public awareness and knowledge

Community garden developed by city youth

APPENDIX C

PROJECT TIMELINE FOR CENTRAL FALLS' KIDS FIRST

Spring 1992	Community partnership established as Central Falls' Kids First
June 1992	Goals defined: 1. Expand School Breakfast 2. Expand Summer Feeding 3. Expand WIC 4. Expand Nutrition Education
July 1992	Staff person hired to coordinate and evaluate project
August 1992	Mayor appoints a steering committee
September 1992	Steering Committee meets to develop plan of action
October 1992	Focus groups assess barriers to school breakfast participation
January 1993	Subcommittees formed to address each major goal area
	School Breakfast Program offered at all schools
	Subcommittee representatives meet with Governor Sundlun to discuss state funding for WIC
February 1993	Summer Feeding Subcommittee surveys families about participation barriers
May 1993	Breakfast Club created for Central Falls Elementary Schools
	Summer Feeding Public Awareness Campaign begins
June 1993	Alan Shawn Feinstein Foundation awards Central Falls' Kids First grant to expand the Summer Feeding Program
Summer 1993	Summer Feeding offers new sites and broader service
August 1993	ABC's *Good Morning America* features Central Falls' Summer Feeding Program
Fall 1993	Feasibility of Universal-Free Breakfast Program explored
January 1994	RI Department of Education approves a universal-free pilot breakfast program for Central Falls

February 1994	Tufts University School of Nutrition gathers baseline data for universal-free evaluation study in Central Falls
March 1994	WIC 20th Anniversary Event held for local WIC clients
	Operation Breakfast pilot program initiated
June 1994	Universal-free pilot and evaluation completed
	Share Our Strength's Operation Frontline and Kids First discuss partnership
Summer 1994	Summer Breakfast project is initiated in selected locations
September 1994	Operation Frontline hires a local coordinator and begins a program in Central Falls
Fall 1994	Superintendent continues universal-free school breakfast
	Feasibility of developing a farmers' market is explored
	City Year asks for support to develop a community garden in Central Falls
October 1994	Kids First partnership awarded 1994 USDA Best Practice for school breakfast expansion efforts
Winter 1995	WIC subcommittee works with Providence DownCity Farmers' Market to develop a local market for Central Falls area
March 1995	Breakfast promotion program is offered to 3rd and 4th grade students and high school health classes
May 1995	Kids First nominated for 1995 USDA Best Practice Award
Spring 1995	Tufts University Center on Hunger study finds Central Falls schoolchildren's participation, tardiness and nutrient intakes improve as a result of free school breakfast
June 1995	Anthony Spinazzola Foundation gives Central Falls' Kids First grant to develop *Green Thumb Project*
Summer 1995	Green Thumb Project develops community garden
	Area WIC clients participate in the WIC Farmers' Market Voucher Program
August 1995	ABC's *Nightline* features Central Falls' School Breakfast Program

APPENDIX D

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE AND FINDINGS

This focus group discussion guide was used in Central Falls with parents of school-aged children. Guides were also developed for use with elementary-aged children (6-8 year olds), junior/senior high school students (12-18 year olds), and food service workers.

I. Introductions

Introduce moderator, host and notetaker
Introduce parents (distribute nametags)
Explain reason group has been gathered; to answer questions about school food programs, particularly school breakfast
Explain the presence of the tape recorder

II. Background on household breakfast habits

What is breakfast in your household?
Do you eat breakfast? When do you eat breakfast?
What do you eat for breakfast? Who eats breakfast?

Is it difficult to get your children to eat breakfast?
What gets them interested in eating breakfast?

How important is it to you that your family eats breakfast?

How many of you have children who eat breakfast at school?
How often do they eat school breakfast each week?

III. Parents' impression of school breakfast

(QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS WHO HAVE CHILDREN WHO EAT BREAKFAST IN SCHOOL)

What do you like about school breakfast?
What do your children say they like about school breakfast?

What <u>don't</u> you like about school breakfast?
What do your children say they <u>don't</u> like about school breakfast?

Do you have to change your morning routine when your children eat breakfast in school?

(QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS WHO HAVE CHILDREN WHO DO NOT EAT BREAKFAST IN SCHOOL)

Were you aware the schools offer a breakfast program?
What is (are) the main reason(s) your children do not participate in school breakfast?

(QUESTIONS FOR ALL PARENTS)

Do your children eat school lunch?
What do you like about school lunch?
What do you dislike about school lunch?

IV. Components of the School Breakfast Program and parent impressions

(MAY BE NECESSARY TO GIVE THE PARENTS SOME INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM AND THEN ASK THE FULL GROUP THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS)

The school breakfast program offers:

juice 2 boxes low-sugar cereal and milk	or	juice low-sugar cereal muffin and milk

Which of these foods would your children choose (not choose) for breakfast at home?

Most elementary schools offer breakfast from 8:00 am to 8:30 am, high school from 7:30 am to 8:00 am.

How does the time school breakfast is offered influence your decision to use or not use the program?
Do your children choose to eat breakfast at this time at home?
At what time in the morning are your children most hungry?

School breakfast is offered in the school's designated cafeteria.

Have your children said anything positive (negative) about their school cafeteria?

What changes in school breakfast could interest you in encouraging your children to participate, or participate more, in the program?

What would you suggest the schools do to increase the number of children who participate in the program?

What did you learn, that you didn't already know, about school breakfast?

V. THANK YOU

FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

- **Elementary children and parents who had young children participating in school breakfast** were generally positive about the program. Some wanted more variety, hot foods, a different brand of orange juice, and sugar for their cereal, but most liked the offerings, the people behind the counter, and how easy it was to participate in the program.

- **Older students (12-14 years old) who participated in the program** felt isolated, but they participated because they had no food or milk at home, or they were late and found school breakfast easily accessible. All agreed that eating breakfast was more important than staying outside the building with friends.

- **Non-participating children of all ages and parents of non-participating children** had numerous reasons for not using the program. Older students felt school breakfast was for poor children, or younger children. Some students preferred to skip breakfast altogether. Parents of some older students were not aware breakfast was served in their child's school. Some of these parents felt breakfast should be eaten at home.

- **Food service workers** felt more children would use the breakfast program if more families were aware of the program, and if older children felt it was "cool" to participate in school breakfast. They thought children wanted more variety in the breakfast menu and that they should experiment with appealing ethnic breakfast items.

APPENDIX E

SUMMER FOOD SERVICE SURVEY
INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT AND RESULTS

Number of Responses: 200 distributed and 113 surveys returned

Questions and Responses:

Did you know the City of Central Falls offers a summer recreation program for children up to age 18?

59 YES 53 NO 1 No Response

Did you know the recreation program provides a **lunch** to children in parks and other selected areas each weekday throughout the summer?

69 YES 43 NO 1 No Response

Did any of your children receive **lunch** through the recreation program last summer?

40 YES 60 NO 13 No Response

If so, how many children? 85 (n=34)

and how often did your children eat lunch? (complete one)

3.6 (n=23) Number of times each week

or

2.5 (n=5) Number of times each month

or

3.3 (n=4) Number of times each summer

Do you plan to have your children participate in the program this summer?

64 YES 35 NO 12 Maybe

If you were aware that lunch was provided but your children did not participate, please describe why they chose not to eat lunch.

What could the recreation department do so more Central Falls children would participate in summer programs and lunch?

APPENDIX F

SCHOOL BREAKFAST CLUB

In Central Falls elementary schools, principals and breakfast aides receive a monthly memo that outlines a theme featuring three or four simple activities and promotional tokens to offer to breakfast participants. ***Breakfast in School is Cool,*** was the theme for a month of Breakfast Club activities that followed a pre-developed set of promotional materials available through the New England Dairy and Food Council. Schools distributed fliers or incentives and conducted activities according to a sample schedule:

Week 1 *Breakfast in School is Cool* coloring sheets and parent fliers were sent home with all children

Week 2 Children who *Bring a Friend to Breakfast* received a special notepad or eraser

Week 3 A special breakfast dish set was awarded to the child with the *Lucky Milk Carton* (one milk carton marked with an X on the bottom)

Week 4 *Crazy Breakfast* (cheese pizza, orange juice and milk) was offered to remind children that breakfast foods can vary and be fun

An informal test of the effect of Breakfast Club activities on school breakfast participation over a single month found that average participation increased 61%, while breakfast participation dropped an average of 5.5% the same month in the two schools where the Club was not offered.

BREAKFAST CLUB THEMES AND ACTIVITIES

Eat School Breakfast and Have a Bowl!

This theme served as the Breakfast Club kickoff. All school children received Club buttons designed by fellow classmates; button artwork designed by a Central Falls 4th grader and button slogan developed by a 2nd grader. Children who wore their buttons to school breakfast received small incentives the first month of the program.

Warm Up To Breakfast

During the winter months children were served warm breakfast treats including hot chocolate, french toast sticks, and toast from various whole grain and ethnic breads. Once a week the Lucky Milk contest was offered and winners received warm mittens, scarves and hats.

Sweet Mornings

During the month of February, the school breakfast program featured the sweet taste of fruit. Each morning of the week a different fruit, both canned and fresh, was featured in a small paper cup. Parents received "5 A Day" fliers available free through the state health department.

Breakfast Surprizes

During the holiday months, this theme offered different breakfast menus (Crazy Breakfast) and special visitors to breakfast (Frosty the Snowman). Lucky milk prizes came more frequently and were gift wrapped.

Have You Had Your Breakfast?

Schools offered Brunch for Lunch to remind children during the lunch hour about the importance of breakfast. Parent fliers went home with children to reinforce this message and to inform them about their school breakfast program.

5 A Day For Good Health

The message of five fruits and vegetables each day for good health was a Breakfast Club theme. School nurses attended breakfast throughout the month with different fruits and vegetables. Children who could identify the products or sampled the product received a small incentive.

Team Up With Breakfast

In conjunction with the New England Dairy and Food Council, a series of special breakfasts were developed that featured different sports and sport star souvenirs (Roger Clemens of the Red Sox, Reggie Lewis of the Celtics). Children and parents were reminded that in order to perform your best you have to eat right.

Food Pyramid Follies

In conjunction with the Rhode Island Department of Education's Nutrition Education Training Program, children attending breakfast were introduced to the USDA Food Guide Pyramid through the distribution of a number of simple tools; pyramid puzzles, pyramid stickers and worksheets, and pyramid magnets.

APPENDIX G:

OPERATION BREAKFAST

To ensure that families would take full advantage of the Universal-Free School Breakfast Program, Central Falls' Kids First enhanced existing school breakfast promotions to include more parent education and outreach. Outreach efforts for *Operation Breakfast* included the following components:

1. Parent/Teacher Breakfasts - A series of parent/teacher breakfasts was scheduled throughout the school year. Parents and teachers received fliers inviting them to attend breakfast with their children. Committee members attended each school's parent/teacher breakfast to talk to parents and answer questions about the school breakfast program. Special Breakfast Club activities, such as Baseball Day and Spring Fling, were scheduled around these breakfasts to further increase student and parent attendance (flier samples are included).

2. Information for Parents and Teachers - A number of informational fliers were sent home to parents about the universal-free breakfast program. In addition, teachers received a letter at home from their superintendent asking for their help to promote the school breakfast program. With this mailing each teacher received A Statement on the Link between Nutrition and Cognitive Development in Children, a synthesis report developed by Tufts University's Center on Hunger, Poverty and Nutrition Policy that summarized research on school breakfast and other child nutrition programs.

3. Breakfast Club - Breakfast Club activities continued in each school and many monthly themes were devoted to the importance of breakfast.

4. Community-Wide Outreach - Information was reported in the local newspapers as special news features and on local television as public service announcements supported by the state Department of Education. Children created colorful posters about school breakfast to be displayed in schools and community agencies. Informational posters were also distributed to local shopkeepers for display in shop windows.

5. Breakfast in the Classroom - A special breakfast promotion program was developed to introduce the importance of breakfast to all students. Students received a bag breakfast in their classroom, watched a breakfast promotion video (listings included), and discussed why children need breakfast in order to perform at their best. The program was offered in the elementary schools and in the junior/ senior high school.

APPENDIX H

SUMMER FOOD SERVICE OUTREACH CAMPAIGN

Central Falls' Kids First, in collaboration with the Central Falls Recreation Department, developed a Summer Food Service Outreach Campaign comprised of the following components:

1) Multicultural outreach materials were distributed through the schools and throughout the community. Examples included:

Summer in the Parks, a poster featuring the activities and offerings of the Summer Recreation and Lunch Program, was designed by a high school art student and colored by youth in an after-school program. The poster was displayed in shop windows, schools, community agencies and other outlets throughout the city.

School Fliers sent home with students announced the locations and times for summer meal service. Flier templates were developed by *Associated Milk Producers Incorporated* of Texas and were modified for use in Central Falls. Flier templates are available through the Center on Hunger, Poverty and Nutrition Policy in both Spanish and English.

A City Wide Flier Distribution was conducted during the summer to promote the program further. Area youth, supervised by a local youth agency, were paid a stipend to distribute fliers door-to-door. Children who came to the parks with the flier received a small incentive.

2) Program services were expanded in the parks and underserved neighborhoods. Three new sites were opened in underserved neighborhoods in 1993, and breakfast service was introduced in 1994.

3) Lunchtime promotions were introduced to attract new children to the park and keep families interested in the program. Examples included:

Lucky Milk, where the child who got the milk carton with a black X on the bottom received a special prize.

Bring A Friend to Lunch, where any child who brought a friend to lunch received a special gift.

Special Events and Theme Days, where activities were scheduled around lunch service to entertain children, such as Jamaica Day, Take Me Out to the Ballgame, Soccer Slam, etc..

APPENDIX I

COMPONENTS OF A MULTICULTURAL FARMERS' MARKET

Kids First worked with the Providence DownCity Farmers' Market Cooperative to create a multicultural farmers' market for the entire community. Cooperatively, they developed a farmers' market for Central Falls residents with the following unique features;

New Ethnic Products - Local WIC clients were solicited to identify fruits and vegetables with ethnic appeal that area farmers could grow and sell. White sweet potatoes (batata), indian corn, green tomatoes (tomatillos), and yucca were considered for future planting.

Market Ambassadors - Volunteer agency staff were trained to serve as ambassadors and translators or interpreters for the market. They also helped WIC clients use their vouchers wisely.

Community Garden Partnership - The Farmers' Market Cooperative agreed to allow local growers to sell their crops alongside their members. Plans for a youth gardening project could be expanded to become an economic development project for area youth.

The Central Falls Farmers' Market was promoted through the schools and the local media. For the first year of operation, market vendors were pleased with local participation and these new features will become more fully integrated in the future.

About the Center

The Center on Hunger, Poverty and Nutrition Policy was established at Tufts University in 1990. Its purpose is to advance public policy choices which reduce hunger and poverty, and enhance the development and productive capacities of American families and children. The Center carries out policy research and analyses, and works with governmental leaders and the media to promote greater understanding of policy alternatives for the nation.

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This report was prepared under the direction of Gayle Leitch Kelly, M.S., Project Coordinator. The combined accomplishments of Central Falls' Kids First are a tribute to the dedication of all its community partners and their commitment to the productive futures of Central Falls' children. Special thanks go to Central Falls' community leadership for their sustained support of the Kids First initiative; former Mayor Thomas Lazieh, current Mayor Lee Matthews, Superintendent Maureen Chevrette, and Kids First chairperson Nancy Krieger. Appreciation is also expressed to those community agencies that accepted responsibility for individual activities with the Kids First effort, including the Central Falls School Department, Central Falls Recreation Department, Blackstone Valley Community Health Care-WIC, Channel One and Share Our Strength's Operation Frontline/Providence. We are also grateful to the Rhode Island Department of Education Office of School Food Services for their continued efforts to facilitate program expansion activities and provide useful program participation information. The Center expressly recognizes the role of Dr. Troy Earhart, whose concern for Central Falls' children and for their futures helped to make Central Falls' Kids First a viable reality. Finally, the outcomes of this highly successful initiative would not have been achieved without the sustained program and financial support of Hasbro, Inc. and the Hasbro Children's Foundation. Hasbro support was augmented by important support from the Alan Shawn Feinstein Foundation, the Anthony Spinazzola Foundation and a New York City children's foundation which wishes to remain anonymous.

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